



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### China's regulations control "all aspects" of Tibetan Buddhism: State Dept.

<https://savetibet.org/chinas-regulations-control-all-aspects-of-tibetan-buddhism-state-dept>

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Chinese Communist Party's repressive measures control "all aspects" of Tibetan Buddhism and has brought the religion further under the thumb of the Chinese government last year, the State Department says in its annual report on global religious freedom.

The department's 2020 Report on International Religious Freedom documents restrictions on religious practice in countries across the globe last year, along with religious intolerance, discrimination and violence.

During the report's release on May 12, 2021, Dan Nadel, senior official for the Office of International Religious Freedom, said the Chinese government—which has illegally ruled Tibet for more than 60 years—is "without equivocation" one of the "worst abusers of religious freedom in the world."

According to the department's report, Tibetans last year faced forcible disappearance, arrest, torture and prolonged detention without trial for simply practicing their religion. [Tibetan prisoners](#) died in custody from the beatings they received, while others died shortly after their release as a result of the torture they experienced.

China also enforced policies to curb the influence of the [Dalai Lama](#), interfere in the selection of [Tibetan Buddhist](#) leaders and make the religion serve the interests of the CCP, the report states.

### Religious repression

The report chronicles a wide range of [religious freedom violations](#) in Tibet last year:

- The Chinese government continued to restrict the size of Buddhist monasteries, including by continuing its campaign to evict monks and nuns from their religious institutions. According to sources, Chinese authorities evicted between 6,000 and 17,000 monks and nuns from the Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Buddhist institutes between 2016 and 2019.
- Restrictions on travel inside Tibet also made it difficult for monastics and laypeople to go on traditional religious pilgrimages and take part in Buddhist practices.
- China forced monasteries to display the Chinese flag and images of Chinese leaders, while also requiring ordinary Tibetans to replace photos of the Dalai Lama in their homes with photos of Chairman Mao and current Chinese President Xi Jinping.
- China also ordered Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region, which spans about half of Tibet, to [remove their Tibetan prayer flags](#) and destroy the poles that held them.

- Chinese authorities canceled several religious festivals in Tibet, citing COVID-19. However, the report notes that some felt China was using the virus as a pretext. Just this month, the Chinese government told Tibetans in the capital of Lhasa to [restrict their religious practices for “Saga Dawa,”](#) a Buddhist holy month, because of the pandemic, even though China continued to allow Chinese tourists into Tibet and even boasted about the surge in tourism.
- The authorities also continued to impose mass surveillance on Tibetans, including through camera systems and even police stations inside monasteries.
- Tibetans, especially those who wore traditional and religious clothing, said they [faced discrimination](#) from employers, hotels and taxi drivers.

## Dalai Lama’s succession

The report says that China continued to inhibit Tibetans from following the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Buddhist leader whom China forced into exile in India in 1959.

Chinese officials warned supporters of the Dalai Lama, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, that they could face arrest under China’s “anti-organized crime” initiative. Officials also ordered Tibetans to report anyone who “links up with the Dalai clique.”

China further reiterated its plans to appoint its own successor to the 85-year-old Dalai Lama. The Chinese government absurdly claims the right to control the reincarnation of Tibetan Buddhist leaders.

In 1995, after the Dalai Lama recognized Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, a six-year-old boy in Tibet, as the reincarnated Panchen Lama, one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism, the Chinese government [abducted the child and his family](#). No one has seen or heard from them since.

In place of the real Panchen Lama, China appointed its own Panchen Lama, who is being made to serve as a mouthpiece for the Chinese government.

## US response

In response to China’s outrageous plans, the US last year passed the bipartisan [Tibetan Policy and Support Act](#), a groundbreaking piece of legislation that dramatically upgrades US support for the Tibetan people.

Among many other things, the TPSA makes it official US policy that only the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Buddhist community can decide on his eventual succession.

If any Chinese officials try to interfere in that process, the US will sanction them under the TPSA.

The State Department report notes that last year on the 25th anniversary of the true Panchen Lama’s abduction, the secretary of state called on China to make his whereabouts public. A department spokesperson [reiterated that call](#) last month before the Panchen Lama’s 32nd birthday.

The report adds that the State Department also banned Chinese officials from entering the United States last year over their role in preventing US journalists, diplomats and ordinary citizens from entering Tibet. Those bans came under the [Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act](#), another major bipartisan bill that became law in 2018.

## “Sinicization” of Tibetan Buddhism

Despite the US support, the report makes it clear that China’s persecution of Tibetan Buddhists remains a major concern.

At China’s Seventh Tibet Work Forum in Beijing in August 2020, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for [promoting the “Sinicization” of Tibetan Buddhism](#). Sinicization is an effort by the Chinese government to eliminate Tibetans’ unique identity and force them to assimilate into Chinese society, thus depriving Tibetans of their human rights and persecuting a specific religion, perhaps to extinction.

### ICT quote

International Campaign for Tibet said:

*“The State Department’s annual report on international religious freedom is a welcome sign of the US’ steadfast and continued support for Tibetan Buddhists who are suffering from China’s severe religious repression. As administrations have changed in Washington, DC, the US’ bipartisan support for the people of Tibet has never wavered. However, China’s persecution of Tibetan Buddhists also continues unabated. We call on the Biden Administration to implement the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act and the Tibetan Policy & Support Act so that the Tibetan people’s rights are protected.”*

[Read the State Department’s 2020 Report on International Religious Freedom section on Tibet.](#)



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